

To: "Alpine @ Yahoo" <Alpine@yahoogroups.com>
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Date: Wed, 16 Apr 2003 21:37:05 -0500
Subject: [Alpine] Central School Stories

I struck a gold mine of stories about Central School this evening, chatting with Lee and Joanna Cowell. Here's a few from Lee.

Most of us recall that the boys and girls restrooms in the building were in the basement. In addition, the boys restroom opened up out into the west schoolyard while the girls restroom did not open up to the east schoolyard. (There you have it; the beginnings of gross discrimination, in my humble opinion. ;>) The boys had a door so that they could go straight out from the restroom to the playground to play football.

Here's how it came about. The original building built in 1910 had two out buildings to the north. One was a bus barn and the other was the boys/girls restrooms. During cold weather, folks had to go quite a distance to the restrooms, outside 30-40 ft to the other building.

Lee started at Central in 1938. Sometime about 1940, he says probably in the summer, a basement was dug out under the main building and the restrooms were added. This provided indoor restrooms for everyone. There was a closet in the boy's restroom for equipment.

Here's another Central School story from Lee. The Janitor in about 1933, when Lee's older brother Pete was a student, was a guy named Don Aurelio Olazaba. He is pictured in the Avalanche book of historical Alpine photos. The kids mangled his name and called him Aurelius. Mr. Olazaba

through, had names for the kids, too, and he called Pete Cowell "Peter Rabbit".

In those days, there was actually a bell in the bell tower which was used to ring various events of the school day. Mr. Olazaba had to go up to the tower to ring the bell. Olazaba could look around the whole school yard, so he'd scan the entire grounds before he rang the tardy bell. Well, Pete was always late to school. If he saw Pete coming, he'd yell out "Run, Peter Rabbit, Run! I'll hold the bell." And he would delay ringing the bell so Pete could make it "on time."

Here's another: In 1949, when the schools were moving in buildings from the Marfa air base, the main Central School wooden staircase was condemned as a fire hazard. V. J. Smith was the school architect. Lee's dad, Charlie Cowell, was working for the schools, moving in and rebuilding these buildings. They were thinking of putting in a metal staircase, but Charlie Cowell said that in a fire those would become hot and stressed with heat and would be unsafe too. He convinced them to put in a concrete stairway in the middle of the building.

And a final note: The street in front of Central to the south was widened, curbed and guttered by the City when my dad was either Mayor or Councilman and Lee Cowell was City Secretary. They purposely made it wider because that's where so many parents came to pick up their kids.

So, here's a few for the archives.
Mary Bell Lockhart '67